Never! Never! Never! Never! Never!

A Sermon
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Rev. C. H. SPURGEON,
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"He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."—Hebrews 13:5.

WHAT POWER RESIDES in "Thus saith the Lord!" The man who can grasp by faith, "He hath said," has an all-conquering weapon in his hand. What doubt will not be slain by this to two-edged sword? What fear is that which shall not fall smitten with a deadly wound before this arrow from the bow of God's covenant? Will not the distresses of life and the pangs of death, will not the corruptions within and the temptations without, will not the trials from above and the temptations from beneath all seem but light afflictions when we can hide ourselves behind the bulwark of "He hath said?" Whether for delight in our quietude, or for strength in our conflict, "He hath said" must be our daily resort.

Hence, let us learn, my brethren, the extreme value of *searching the Scriptures.* There may be a promise in the Word which would exactly fit your case, but you may not know of it, and therefore miss its comfort. You are like prisoners in a dungeon, and there may be one key in the bunch which would unlock the door, and you might be free; but if you will not look for it you may remain a prisoner still, though liberty is near at hand. There may be a potent medicine in the great pharmacopia of Scripture, and you may still remain sick, though there is the precise remedy that would meet your disease, unless you will examine and search the Scriptures to discover what "He hath said." Should we not, beside reading Scripture, *store our memories richly with the promises of God?* We can recollect the sayings of great men; we treasure up the verses of renowned poets; ought we not to be profound in our knowledge of the words of God? The Scriptures should be the classics of a Christian, and as our orators quote Homer, or Virgil, or Horace, when they would clinch a point, so we should be able to quote the promises of God when we would solve a difficulty or overthrow a doubt. "He hath said," is the foundation of all riches and the fountain of all comfort, let it dwell in you richly as "a well of water, springing up unto everlasting life." And, oh, my brethren, *how diligently should we test the Scriptures!* Besides searching them by reading, and treasuring them by memory, we should test them by experience, and so often as a promise is proven to be true we should make a mark against it, and note that we also can say, as did one of old, "This is my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me." "Wait on the Lord," said Isaiah, and then he added "Wait, *I say,* on the Lord," as if his own experience led him to echo the voice of God to his hearers. Test the promise, take God's banknote to the counter, and mark if it be cashed. Grasp the lever, which he ordains to lift

your trials, and try if it possesses real power. Cast this divine tree into the bitter waters of your Marah, and learn how it will sweeten them. Take this salt, and throw it into the turbid waters, and witness if they be not made sweet, as were the waters of old by the prophet Elisha. Taste and see that the Lord is good, for there is no want to them that fear him.

The Apostles, you will notice, like their Master, were always very ready at quotations. Though they were inspired men, and could have used fresh words, yet they preferred, as an example to us, to quote "He hath said;" let us do the same, for, though the words of ministers may be sweet, the words of God are sweeter; and though original thoughts may have the novelty of freshness, yet the ancient words of God have the ring, and the weight, and the value of old and precious coins, and they shall not be found wanting in the day when we shall use them.

It seems from our text that "He hath said" is not only useful to chase away doubts, fears, difficulties, and devils, but that it also yieldeth nourishment to all our graces. You perceive that when the apostle would make us contented, he says, "Be content with such things as ye have, for *he hath said;"* and when he would make us bold and courageous, he puts it, *"He* hath said, therefore, *we* may boldly say, God is my helper, I will not fear what man can do unto me." When the apostle would nourish faith, he does it by quoting from Scripture the examples of Abraham, of Isaac, of Jacob, of Moses, of Gideon, of Barak, and of Jephthah. When he would nourish our patience, he says, "Ye remember the patience of Job;" or if it be our prayerfulness, he says, "Elias was a man of like passions with us, and he prayed and prevailed." *"He hath said"* is food for every grace as well as death for every sin. Here you have nourishment for that which is good, and poison for that which is evil. Search ye, then, the Scriptures, for so shall ye grow healthy, strong, and vigorous in the divine life.

We turn at once, with great pleasure, to the wonderful words of our text, "He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." I have no doubt you are aware that our translation does not convey the whole force of the original, and that it would hardly be possible in English to give the full weight of the Greek. We might render it, "He hath said, I will never, never leave thee; I will never, never, never forsake thee;" for, though that would be not a literal, but rather a free rendering, yet, as there are five negatives in the Greek, we do not know how to give their force in any other way. Two negatives nullify each other in our language; but here, in the Greek, they intensify the meaning following one after another, as I suppose David's five stones out of the brook would have done if the first had not been enough to make the giant reel. The verse we sung just now is a very good rendering of the original—

""The soul that on Jesus hath lean'd for repose,
I will not, I will not desert to his foes;
That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake,
I'll never, no never, no never forsake."

Here you have the five negatives very well placed, and the force of the Greek, as nearly as possible, given.

In trying to expound this five-fold assurance, this quintessence of consolation, we shall have to draw your attention, first of all, to *an awful condition,* or what is negatived; secondly, to *a gracious promise,* or what is positively guaranteed; next, we shall observe *notable occasions* or times when this promise was uttered; a few words upon certain *sweet confirmations* which prove the text to be true; and then, in the fifth place, *necessary conclusions* which flow from the words of the promise.

I. First of all, then, AN AWFUL CONDITION—lost and FORSAKEN of God! I am quite certain I shall fail in attempting to describe this state of mind. I have thought of it, dreamed of it, and felt it in such feeble measure as a child of God can feel it, but how to describe it I know not.

1. *Forsaking* implies *an utter loneliness.* Put a traveler in a vast howling wilderness, where for many a league there is no trace of man—no foot-step of traveler. The solitary wretch cries for help—the hollow echo of the rocks is his only reply. No bird in the air; not even a prowling jackal in the waste; not an insect in the sunbeam to keep him company; not even a solitary blade of grass to remind him of God! Yet, even there he is not alone: for yon bare rocks prove a God, and the hot sand beneath his feet, and the blazing sun above his head, all witness to a present Deity. But what would be the loneliness of a man forsaken of God! No migration could be so awful as this, for he says, "If I take the wings of the morning and fly to the uttermost parts of the sea *thou art there."* Such a state were worse than hell, for David says, "If I make my bed in hell *thou art there."* Loneliness is a feeling which none of us delight in. Solitude may have some charms, but they who are forced to be her captives have not discovered them. A transient solitude may give pleasure; to be alone, utterly alone, is terrible; to be alone, *without God,* is such an emphasis of loneliness, that I defy the lip even of a damned spirit to express the horror and anguish that must be concentrated in it. There is far more than you and I dream of in the language of our Lord Jesus, when he says, "I have trodden the wine-press *alone." Alone!* You remember he once said, "Ye shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me." There is no agony in that sentence, but what must be his grief when he says—"I have trodden the wine-press *alone!"* "My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" is the cry of human nature in its uttermost dismay. Thank God, you and I by this promise are taught that we never shall know the desperate loneliness of being forsaken of God; yet, this is what it would be if he should forsake us!

2. Mingling with this mournful solitude is a sense of *utter helplessness.* Power belongeth unto God; withdraw the Lord, and the strong men must utterly fail. The archangel without God passes away and is not; the everlasting hills do bow, and the solid pillars of the earth are dissolved. Without God our dust returneth to the earth; without God our spirit mourneth like David, "I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind; I am like a broken vessel." Christ

knew what this was when he said, "I am a worm, and no man." He was so utterly broken, so emptied of all power, that as he hung with dislocated limbs upon the cross, he cried, "My strength is dried up like a potsherd; thou hast brought me into the dust of death." No broken reed or smoking flax can be so feeble as a soul forsaken of God. Our state would be as deplorably destitute as that of Ezekiel's infant, deserted and cast into the open field with none to swaddle and none to care for it, left utterly to perish and to die,—such should we be if we could be forsaken of God! Glorious are those negatives which shut us in from all fear of this calamity.

3. To be forsaken of God implies *utter friendlessness.* A thousand times let Jehovah be blessed that very few of us have ever known what it is to be friendless! There have been times in the experience of some of us when we felt that we stood without a friend in the particular spot which we then occupied, for we had a grief which we could not entrust to any other heart. Every man who is eminently useful in the Church will know seasons when as the champion of Israel he must go forth alone. This, however, is compensated by stronger faith, and the moral grandeur of solitary heroism. But what must it be to be some poor wretch whose parents have long since been buried; who has lost his most distant relatives; who, passing along the street remembers the name of one who was once his father's friend, knocks at the door, and is repulsed; recollects another—and this is his last hope—one he played with in his infancy—stands at that door asking for charity and is bidden to go his way, and paces the cold November streets while the rain is pouring down, feeling to his utter dismay that no friend breathes for him? Should he return to his own parish it would be like going to his own dungeon, and if he enters the workhouse no eye there will flash sympathy upon him! He is utterly friendless and alone! I believe that many a suicide has been produced by the want of a friend. As long as a man feels he has some one loving him, he has something worth living for; but when the last friend is gone and we feel that we are floating on a raft far out at sea, with not a sail in sight, and we cry, "Welcome death!" Our Lord and Master was brought to this state, and knew what it was to be forsaken, for he had no friends left. "He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me." "All the disciples forsook him and fled." Brethren, many saints have lost all their friends, but have bravely borne the trial, for turning their eye to heaven, they have felt that though without friends they were still befriended. They have heard the voice of Jesus say, "I will not leave you orphans; I will come unto you;" and, made strong by Divine friendship, they have felt that they were not utterly bereaved. But to be forsaken *of God!* Oh, may you and I never know it! To be without a friend in heaven; to look to that throne of glory and to see the blackness of darkness there; to turn to mercy and receive a frown; to fly to love and receive a rebuke; to turn to God and find that his ear is heavy that he will not hear, and his hand restrained that he will not help—oh! this is terror, terror heaped on terror, to be thus forsaken!

4. Loneliness, helplessness, friendlessness—add these together, and then put the next—*hopelessness.* A man forsaken of men may still entertain some hope. But let him be forsaken of God, and then hope hath failed; the last window is shut; not a ray of light now streams into the thick Egyptian darkness of his mind. Life is death; death is damnation—damnation in its lowest deeps. Let him look to men, and they are broken reeds; let him turn to angels, and they are avengers; let him look to death, and even the tomb affords no refuge. Look where he will, blank, black despair seizes hold upon him. Our blessed Lord knew this when lover and friend had been put far from him, and his acquaintance into darkness. It was only his transcendent faith which enabled him after all to say "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell: neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." The black shadow of this utter hopelessness went over him when he said, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death," and he "sweat as it were great drops of blood, falling down to the ground."

5. To make up this five-fold forsaking, against which we have the five negatives, let us add to all this loneliness, helplessness, friendlessness, and hopelessness, a sense of *unutterable agony.* We speak of agony, but to feel it is a very different thing. Misery and despair—the *wrestling* of these with the spirit till the spirit is trodden down, and crushed, and broken, and chooses strangling rather than life; a horrible sense of every evil having made one's heart its den; a consciousness that we are the target for all God's arrows; that *all* God's waves and billows have gone over us; that he hath forgotten to be gracious; that he will be merciful to us no more; that he hath in anger shut up the bowels of his compassion—this is a part of being forsaken of God which only lost spirits in hell can know! Our unbelief sometimes lets us get a glimpse of what this would be, but it is only a glimpse, only a glimpse; let us thank God that we are delivered from all fear of this tremendous evil. By five wounds doth our Redeemer slay our unbelief.

Brethren, if God should leave us, mark the result: I picture to myself the very best state of one forsaken of God—it is uncertainty and chance. I would rather be an atom, which hath God with it, predestinating its track and forcing it onward according to his own will, than I would be an archangel left to my own choice, to do as I would and to act at I please, without the control of God; for an archangel, left without God, would soon miss his way, and fall to hell; or he would melt away, and drop and die; but the tiny atom, having God with it, would fulfill its predestinated course; it would be ever in a sure track, and throughout eternity would have as much potence in it as at its first creation. I cannot think why some people are so fond of free-will. I believe free-will is the delight of sinners, but that God's will is the glory of saints. There is nothing I desire more to get rid of than my own will, and to be absorbed into the will and purpose of my Lord. To do according to the will of Him who is most good, most true, most wise, most mighty, seems to me to be heaven. Let others choose the dignity of independence, I crave the glory of being wholly dead in Christ, and only alive in him. Oh! dear friends, if the Lord should forsake us, to say the best of it, our

course would be uncertain, and, ere long it would end in nothingness. We know, further, that if God should forsake the best saint alive, that man would immediately fall into sin. He now stands securely on yonder lofty pinnacle, but his brain would reel and he would fall, if secret hands did not uphold him. He now picks his steps carefully; take away grace from him and he would roll in the mire, and wallow in it like other men. Let the godly be forsaken of his God, and he would go from bad to worse, till his conscience, now so tender, would be seared as with a hot iron. Next he would ripen into an atheist or a blasphemer, and he would come to his dying bed foaming at the mouth with rage; would come before the bar of his Maker with a curse upon his lip; and in eternity, left and forsaken of God, he would sink to hell with the condemned, ay, and among the damned he would have the worst place, lower than the lowest, finding in the lowest depths a lower depth, finding in the wrath of God something more dreadful than the ordinary wrath which falleth upon common sinners!

When we thus describe being forsaken of God, is it not satisfactory to the highest degree to remember that we have God's word for it five times over, "I will never, never leave thee; I will never, never, never forsake thee?" I know those who caricature Calvinism say we teach that let a man live as he likes, yet if God be with him, he will be safe at the last. We teach no such thing, and our adversaries know better. They know that our doctrines are invulnerable if they will state them correctly, and that the only way in which they can attack us is to slander us and to misrepresent what we teach. Nay, verily, we say not so, but we say that where God begins the good work, the man will never live as he likes, or if he does, he will like to live as God would have him live; that where God begins a good work he carries it on; that man is never forsaken of God, nor does he forsake God, but is kept even to the end.

II. We have before us now, in the second place, A GRACIOUS PROMISE, or what is positively guaranteed.

What is guaranteed in this promise? Beloved, herein doth God give to his people everything. *"I* will never leave thee." Then no attribute of God can cease to be engaged for us. Is he mighty? He will show himself strong on the behalf of them that trust him. Is HE love? Then with everlasting lovingkindness will he have mercy upon us. Whatever attributes may compose the character of Deity every one of them to its fullest extent shall be engaged on our side. Moreover, whatsoever God hath, whether it be in the lowest hades or in the highest heaven, whatever can be contained in infinity or can be held within the circumference of eternity, whatever, in fine, can be in him who filleth all things, and yet is greater than all things, shall be with his people for ever, since "He hath said, *I* will never leave you, nor forsake you." How one might enlarge here, but I forbear; ye yourselves know that to sum up "all things" is a task beyond all human might.

III. More fully, however, to expound this promise, I would remind you of the five OCCASIONS in which it occurs in Scripture. The number five rune all through our subject. The sense and spirit of the text are to be found in innumerable places, and possibly there

may be some other passages which approximate so very nearly to our text, that you might say they also are repetitions, but I think there are five which may clearly take the priority.

1. One of the first instances is to be found in Genesis 28:15. "Behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." Here we have this promise in the case of a *man of trials.* More than either Abraham or Isaac, Jacob was the son of tribulation. He was now flying away from his father's house, leaving the over-fondness of a mother's attachment, abhorred by his elder brother, who sought his blood. He lies down to sleep, with a stone for his pillow, with the hedges for his curtains, with the earth for his bed, and the heavens for his canopy; and as he sleeps thus friendless, solitary, and alone, God saith to him "I will never, never leave thee." Mark his after career. He is guided to Padan-aram; God, his guide, leaves him not. At Padan-aram Laban cheats him, wickedly and wrongfully cheats him in many ways; but God doth not leave him, and he is more than a match for the thievish Laban. He flies at last with his wives and children; Laban, in hot haste pursues him, but the Lord does not leave him; Mizpah's Mount bears witness that God can stop the pursuer, and change the foe into a friend. Esau comes against him; let Jabbok testify to Jacob's wrestlings, and through the power of him who never did forsake his servant, Esau kisses his brother, whom once he thought to slay. Anon Jacob dwells in tents and booths at Succoth; he journeys up and down throughout the land, and his sons treacherously slay the Shechemites. Then the nations round about seek to avenge their death, but the Lord again interposes, and Jacob is delivered. Poor Jacob is bereaved of his sons. He cries—"Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and now ye will take Benjamin away; all these things are against me." But they are not against him; God has not left him, for he has not yet done everything that he had spoken to him of. The old man goes into Egypt; his lips are refreshed while he kisses the cheeks of his favourite Joseph, and until the last, when he gathers up his feet in the bed and sings of that coming Shiloh and the scepter that should not depart from Judah, good old Jacob proves that in six troubles God is with his people, and in seven he doth not forsake them; that even to hoar hairs he is the same, and until old age he doth carry them. You Jacobs, full of affliction, you tried and troubled heirs of heaven, he hath said to you, each one of you—oh! believe him!—I will never leave thee; I will never forsake thee."

2. The next instance in which we find this same promise is in Deuteronomy 31:6. Here we find it spoken, not so much to individuals as to the whole body collectively. Moses said unto the people of Judah, by the Word of God, "Be strong, and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the Lord thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee." Beloved, we may take this promise as being spoken to God's Church, *as a Church.* These people were to fight the accursed nations of Canaan, to drive out the giants, and the men who had chariots of iron, but the Lord said he would never leave them,

nor did he, till from Dan to Beersheba the favored race possessed the promised land, and the tribes went up to Jerusalem with the voice of joyful song. Now, as the Church of God, let us remember that the land lieth before us, and we are called of God to go up and possess it. I would it were my lot yet more and more, like Joshua, to lead you from one place to another, smiting the enemies of the Lord and extending the kingdom of Messias! Let us undertake what we may, we shall never fail. Let us, by faith, dare great things, and we shall do great things. Let us venture upon notable exploits which shall seem fanatical to reason and absurd to men of prudence, for he hath said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." If the Church of God would but know that her Lord cannot leave her, she might attempt greater things than she has ever done, and the success of her attempts would be most certain and sure. God never can forsake a praying people, nor cast off a laboring Church; he must bless us even to the end.

3. The third occasion upon which this promise was made is in Joshua 1:5, where the Lord says to Joshua, "There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. "Now this is *a minister's text.* If we be called to lead the people, to bear the brunt of the fight, the burden and heat of the day, let us treasure up this as our precious consolation, he will not fail us nor forsake us. It needs not that I should tell you that it is not every man who can stand first in the ranks, and that, albeit there is no small share of honor given by God to such a man, yet there is a bitterness in his lot which no other men can know. There are times when, if it were not for faith, we would give up the ghost, and, were not the Master with us, we would turn our back and fly, like Jonah, unto Nineveh. But if any of you be called to occupy prominent positions in God's Church, bind this about your arm and it shall make you strong; He hath said to you, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Go, in this thy might; the Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valor.

4. On the next occasion, this same promise was given by David in his last moments to his son Solomon, 1 Chronicles 28:20. David was speaking of what he himself by experience had proved to be true, and he declares—"Be strong and of good courage, and do it: fear not, nor be dismayed: for the Lord God, even my God, will be with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee, until thou hast finished all the work for the service of the house of the Lord." Some Christians are placed where they need much *prudence, discretion, and wisdom.* You may take this for your promise. The Queen of Sheba came to see Solomon; she put to him many difficult questions, but God did not leave him, nor forsake him, and he was able to answer them all. As judge over Israel, many knotty points were brought before him; you remember the child and the harlots, and how wisely he decided the case. The building of the temple was a very mighty work—the like of which the earth had never seen, but, by wisdom given to him, the stones were fashioned, and laid one upon another, till at last the top stone was brought out with shoutings. You shall do the same, O man of business, though

yours be a very responsible situation. You shall finish your course, O careful worker, though there are many eyes that watch for your halting. You shall do the same, sister, though you need to have seven eyes rather than two, you shall hear the voice of God saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it." Thou shalt never be ashamed nor confounded, world without end.

5. Once more, and perhaps this fifth occasion may be the most comforting to the most of you, Isaiah 41:17, "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them." You may be brought to this state to-day. Your soul may *need Christ,* but you may not be able to find him. You may feel that without the mercy which comes from the atoning blood you are lost. You may have gone to works and ceremonies, to prayings and doings, to almsgivings and to experiences, and have found them all dried wells, and now you can hardly pray, for your tongue cleaves to the roof of your mouth for thirst. Now in your worst condition, brought to the lowest state into which a creature ever can be cast, Christ will not forsake you, he will appear for your help.

Surely, one of these five occasions must suit you, and let me here remind you that whatever God has said to any one saint he has said to all. When he opens a well for one man it is that all may drink. When the manna falls, it is not only for those in the wilderness, but we by faith do eat the manna still. No promise is of private interpretation. When God openeth a granary-door to give out food, there may be some one starving man who is the occasion of its being opened, but all the hungry besides may come and feed too. Whether he gave the word to Abraham or to Moses matters not; he has given it to thee as one of the covenanted seed. There is not a high blessing too lofty for thee; nor a wide mercy too extensive for thee. Lift up now thine eyes to the north and to the south, to the east and to the west, for all this is thine. Climb to Pisgah's top, and view the utmost limit of the divine promise, for the land is all thine own. There is not a brook of living water of which thou mayest not drink. If the land floweth with milk and honey, eat the honey and drink the milk. The fattest of the kine, yea, and the sweetest of the wines, let all be thine, for there is no denial of any one of them to any saint. Be thou bold to believe, for he hath said, "I will never leave *thee,* nor forsake *thee."* To put everything in one, there is nothing you can want, there is nothing you can ask for, there is nothing you can need in time or in eternity, there is nothing living, nothing dying, there is nothing in this world, nothing in the next world, there is nothing now, nothing at the resurrection-morning, nothing in heaven that is not contained in this text—"I will never leave thee; I will never forsake thee."

IV. I shall give five blows to drive home the nail while I speak upon THE SWEET CONFIRMATIONS of this most precious promise.

1. Let me remind you that the Lord will not and cannot leave his people, because of *his relationship to them.* He is your *Father;* will your Father leave you? Has he not said—"Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her

womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee." Would you, being evil, leave your child to perish? Never, never! Remember, Christ is your *husband.* Would you, a husband, neglect your wife? Is it not a shame to a man, unless he nourisheth and cherisheth her even as his own body, and will Christ become one of these ill husbands? Hath he not said—"I hate putting away," and will he ever put thee away? Remember, thou art *part of his body.* No man yet ever hated his own flesh. Thou mayest be but as a little finger, but will he leave his finger to rot, to perish, to starve? Thou mayest be the least honorable of all the members, but is it not written that upon these he bestoweth abundant honor, and so our uncomely parts have abundant comeliness? If he be father, if he be husband, if he be head, if he be all-in-all, how can he leave thee? Think not so hardly of thy God.

2. Then, next, *his honor* binds him never to forsake thee. When we see a house half-built and left in ruins, we say, "This man began to build and was not able to finish." Shall this be said of thy God, that he began to save thee and could not bring thee to perfection? Is it possible that he will break his word, and so stain his truth? Shall men be able to cast a slur upon his power, his wisdom, his love, his faithfulness? No! thank God, no! "I give," saith he "unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." If thou shouldest perish, believer, hell would ring with diabolical laughter against the character of God; and if ever one whom Jesus undertook to save shouldest perish, then the demons of the pit would point the finger of scorn for ever against a defeated Christ, against a God that undertook but went not through.

"His honor is engaged to save
The meanest of his sheep;
All that his heavenly Father gave
His hands securely keep."

3. And if that be not enough, wilt thou remember besides this that *the past* all goes to prove that he will not forsake thee. Thou hast been in deep waters; hast thou been drowned? Thou hast walked through the fires; hast thou been burned? Thou hast had six troubles; hath he forsaken thee? Thou hast gone down to the roots of the mountains, and the weeds have been wrapped about thy head; hath he not brought thee up again? Thou hast borne great and sore troubles; but hath he not delivered thee? Say, when did he leave thee? Testify against him; if thou hast found him forgetful, then doubt him. If thou hast found him unworthy of thy confidence, then disown him, but not till then. The past is vocal with a thousand songs of gratitude, and every note therein proveth by an indisputable logic that he will not forsake his people.

4. And if that be not enough ask thy father and *the saints that have gone before.* Did ever any perish trusting in Christ? I have heard that some whom Jehovah loved have fallen from grace, and have been lost. I have heard lips of ministers thus prostitute themselves to falsehood, but I know that such never was the case. He keepeth all his saints; not one of them

hath perished; they are in his hand, and have hitherto been preserved. David mourneth, "All thy waves and thy billows have gone over me;" yet, he crieth, "Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him." Jonah laments, "The earth with her bars was about me for ever;" and yet, erelong he says, "Salvation is of the Lord." Ye glorified ones above, through much tribulation ye have inherited the kingdom, and wearing your white robes, ye smile from your thrones of glory and say to us, "Doubt not the Lord, neither distrust him, he hath not forsaken his people nor cast off his chosen."

5. Beloved friends, there is *no reason why he should* cast us off. Can you adduce any reason why he should cast you away? Is it your poverty, your nakedness, your peril, the danger of your life? In all these things we are more than conquerors through him that hath loved us. Do you say it is your sins? Then I answer sin can never be a cause why God should cast away his people, for they were full of sin when he at first embraced their persons, and espoused their cause. That would have been a cause why he never should have loved them, but having loved them when they were dead in trespasses and sins, their sin can never be a reason for leaving them. Besides, the Apostle says, "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,"—and sin is one of the things present, and I fear it is one of the things to come—"nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." O child of God, there is no fear of your misusing this precious truth. The base-born professor of godliness may say, "I will sin, for God will not cast me away," but you will not, ye heirs of heaven; rather you will bind this about your heart, and say "Now will I love him who having loved his own, loves them even unto the end." Glory be to God,

"'Midst all my sin, and care, and woe,
His Spirit will not let me go."

Go, ye slaves that fear the curse of God, and sweat and toil; we are his sons, and we know he cannot expel us from his heart. May God deliver us from the infamous bondage of the doctrine which makes men fear that God may be unfaithful, that Christ may divorce his own spouse, may let the members of his own body perish; that he may die for them and yet not save them. If there be any truth taught us in Scripture, it is that the children of God cannot perish. If this Book teaches anything whatever, if it be not all a fiction from beginning to end, it teaches in a hundred places that "The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger." "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but the covenant of his love cannot depart from us saith the Lord that hath mercy upon us."

V. And now, fifthly, the SUITABLE CONCLUSIONS to be drawn from this doctrine.

1. One of the first is *contentment.* The apostle says, "Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content, for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Ishmael, the son of Hagar, had his water in a bottle; and he might have laughed at Isaac because Isaac

had no bottle, but then here was the difference between them—Isaac lived by the well. Now some of us have little enough in this world; we have no bottle of water, no stock in hand; but then we live by the well, and that is better still. To depend upon the daily providence of a faithful God, is better than to be worth twenty thousand pounds a year.

2. *Courage* is the next lesson. Let us boldly say, "God is my helper, why should I fear what man can do unto me." A child of God afraid! Why, there is nothing more contrary to his nature. If any would persecute you, look them in the face and bear it cheerfully. If they laugh at you, let them laugh; you can laugh when they shall howl. If any despise you, be content to be despised by fools, and to be misunderstood by madmen. It were hard if the world loved us; it is an easy thing if the world hateth us. We are so used to be spoken of as altogether vile in our motives and selfish in our objects; so used to hear our adversaries misconstrue our best words and pull our sentences to pieces, that if they were to do anything else but howl, we should think ourselves unworthy. "Who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass; and forgettest the Lord thy maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth."

3. Then next, *we ought to cast off our despondency.* Some of you came here this morning as black as the weather. Just now we saw some gleams of sunshine peering through those side windows, until our friends hastened to draw the blinds, to shut out the dazzling brightness from their eyes; I hope, however, you will not shut out the rays of holy joy which break in upon you now. No, since he has said, "I will never leave nor forsake thee" leave your troubles in your pews, and bear away a song.

4. And then, my brethren, here is argument for *the greatest possible delight.* How we ought to rejoice with joy unspeakable if He will never leave us! Mere songs are not enough; shout for joy all ye that are upright in heart.

5. And, lastly, what ground there is here *for faith!* Let us lean upon our God with all our weight. Let us throw ourselves upon his faithfulness as we do upon our beds, bringing all our weariness to his dear rest. Now, right on our God let us cast the burdens of our bodies, and our souls, for he hath said, "I will never leave thee; I will never forsake thee."

Oh, I wish this promise belonged to you all! I would give my right hand if it could! But some of you must not touch it; it does not belong to some of you, for it is the exclusive property of the man who trusts in Christ. "Oh!" saith one, "then I will trust in Christ." Do it, soul, do it; and if thou trustest in him he will never leave thee. Black as thou art, he will wash thee; he will never leave thee. Wicked as thou art, he will make thee holy, he will never leave thee. Though thou hast nought that should win his love, he will press thee to his bosom; he will never leave thee. Living or dying, in time or in eternity, he will never forsake thee, but will surely bring thee to his right hand, and say, "Here am I, and the children whom thou hast given me."

May God seal these five negatives upon our memories and hearts for Christ's sake. Amen.